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Joint Inspection Unit

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Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with article 9, paragraph 2, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the work programme of the Unit for 2001 and the preliminary listing of potential reports for 2002 and beyond (see annex).

* A/56/50.

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Annex

Programme of work of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2001 and preliminary listing of potential reports for 2002 and beyond

I. Introduction

1. The following work programme has been drawn up in accordance with article 9, paragraph 1, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 31/192 of 22 December 1976. It takes into account the guidelines laid out in successive Assembly resolutions on the functioning of the Unit, in particular resolution 50/233 of 7 June 1996 and 54/16 of 29 October 1999. Section II of the present annex contains the programme of work of the Unit for 2001 and section III, a preliminary listing of potential reports for 2002 and beyond which includes potential subjects the Unit has identified to be dealt with after the completion of the ongoing reports. As hitherto, the programme of work is subject to change in the course of the year: new reports may be added; planned reports may be modified, postponed or cancelled when circumstances so warrant; and titles may be changed to reflect the new thrust of reports.

2. In the context of its programme of work for 2001, the Joint Inspection Unit has planned to undertake 13 new reports and 1 note on subjects for inspections, evaluations and/or investigations in the areas of administration and management, technical cooperation and peace operations.

3. In addition, the actual workload of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2001 includes 11 reports and 2 notes carried over from its previous programmes of work.

4. In 2000, upon a suggestion by the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Joint Inspection Unit decided to add a report entitled "Review of management and administration in the International Telecommunication Union" which is in the process of completion. During the same period, the Unit decided to temporarily postpone the preparation of its report entitled "Planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation in the United Nations system: learning from best practices" until the Secretary-General presents a detailed analysis of the information, management control and evaluation system required to implement the proposal contained in the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on results-based budgeting, which will be submitted in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003, in response to Assembly resolution 55/231 of 23 December 2000.

5. The Joint Inspection Unit would highly appreciate receiving any comments from the legislative organs of the participating organizations on the preliminary listing of potential reports for 2002 and beyond, as well as their specific requests for consideration by the Inspectors in due course.

II. Work programme for 2001

A. Management audit review of outsourcing in the United Nations and the United Nations funds and programmes

6. The General Assembly has approved four basic reasons for outsourcing, namely, (a) to acquire technical skills not readily available in the Organization; (b) to achieve cost savings; (c) to provide a source more effectively, efficiently or expeditiously and (d) to provide services not needed on a long-term basis. In addition, the Secretary-General has, at the request of the Assembly, established criteria for deciding which activities and services should or should not be outsourced. In its resolution 55/232 of 23 December 2000, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General, inter alia, to report on the progress of the implementation of the above-mentioned provisions and to provide information on activities outsourced during the years 1999-2000. The Assembly further requested the Joint Inspection Unit to conduct a management audit review of outsourcing in the United Nations and the United Nations funds and programmes in accordance with existing practice and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. It will be recalled that, in 1997, the Joint Inspection Unit issued a report entitled "The challenge of outsourcing

for the United Nations system" (JIU/REP/97/5) (see A/52/338).

B. United Nations system revenue-producing activities: income generation and cost recovery

7. This subject, which was included in the preliminary listing of potential studies for 2001 and beyond (see A/54/960), was suggested by the Office of Internal Oversight Services and several participating organizations which would like to improve the profitability of their existing revenue-producing activities and explore new avenues of income generation to relieve financial constraints. The report will review existing policies within the United Nations system relating to revenue-producing activities in general and commercial ventures more particularly. It will seek to improve, where necessary, the management and profitability of such activities. It is also intended to look into potential revenue streams that might be compatible with the special mission and character of United Nations system organizations.

C. Evaluation of United Nations Volunteers

8. The General Assembly established the United Nations Volunteers programme in 1970 to serve as an operational partner in development cooperation at the request of United Nations Member States. More than 20,000 volunteers from some 150 countries have, over the years, served in some 140 countries. The year 2001 has been proclaimed by the Assembly the International Year of Volunteers and it provides an opportunity not only to celebrate past successes but also to formulate plans for the future. In this respect, the Joint Inspection Unit has decided to evaluate the programme, in particular from its administrative and management structures and methods, with a view to recommending those improvements that would be thought necessary to ensure the most efficient and optimum use of the programme's resources.

D. Post structures and types of appointments in the United Nations system

9. The secretariat of the World Health Organization (WHO) has suggested that the Joint Inspection Unit undertake a system-wide review of human resources management and reform initiatives. Since such an undertaking would be much too broad in scope, the Unit decided to follow a step-by-step approach and, in the first instance, to review the question of post structures and types of appointments used by the various organizations of the system.

10. The purpose of the report will be to take stock of the current situation and of current initiatives being taken by various organizations to reform their practices with a view to making recommendations aimed at harmonizing criteria and achieving greater coordination among organizations, taking duly into account their specific missions, mandates and features.

E. Implementation of multilingualism in the agencies of the United Nations system

11. On the occasion of the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Charter of the United Nations, the General Assembly adopted resolution 50/11 of 2 November 1995 on multilingualism, whereby it recalled that "the universality of the United Nations and its corollary, multilingualism, entail for each State Member of the Organization, irrespective of the official language in which it expresses itself, the right and the duty to make itself understood and to understand others". The Assembly also emphasized "the importance of providing access for all Governments and all sectors of civil society to the organization's documentation, archives and data banks in all the official languages". It requested the Secretary-General "to ensure the strict implementation of the resolutions establishing language arrangements for both the official languages and the working languages of the Secretariat", and invited Member States to do likewise.

12. The report on multilingualism has been included in the work programme of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2001 upon the suggestion of the secretariats of the World Health Organization and the United Nations.

Despite clear policy decisions from the respective governing bodies calling for an improved multilingual working environment and access to United Nations system information, the practice in many organizations lags behind policy for different reasons. Apart from publications and official documentation, the system-wide development of web sites has added to the challenge of providing material in all official and working languages on an equal basis.

13. The Joint Inspection Unit has dealt in the past with a related subject in its report on "The implications of additional languages in the United Nations system" (JIU/REP/77/5) (see A/32/237). The issue has also been on the agendas of different governing bodies in recent years. The objectives of the current review by the Unit are (a) to assess applicable policy guidelines in the United Nations system; (b) to identify constraints, administrative, financial or otherwise, which may have a bearing on the strict implementation of multilingualism, as well as best practices in overcoming them; and (c) to make recommendations thereon.

F. Comparative analysis of the headquarters agreements entered into by the organizations of the United Nations system

14. Issues related to host country agreements are of continuous interest for States Members of the United Nations, the specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency. As an example, by resolution 2819 (XXVI) of 15 December 1971, the General Assembly established the Committee on Relations with the Host Country. The Committee has submitted a number of reports to the Assembly, which in turn has adopted resolutions based on the Committee's reports. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit will tie in a number of issues which were addressed in previous reports of the Unit, such as, most recently, the report on the management of buildings (JIU/REP/2001/1). In effect, the Unit intends to deliver a comparative analysis of selected topics covered by the host country agreements entered into by the organizations of the United Nations system. The report will identify areas where adjustments might be advisable and develop some thoughts which could serve as a basis for model rules for future host country agreements. The thrust of the report will be to optimize the terms of host country agreements to the mutual benefit of the organizations and their host countries, thus contributing to efforts to improve overall efficiency.

G. Contribution to the methodology of the definition of objectives on the basis of selected economic and social affairs programmes of the United Nations

15. Despite the considerable progress made over the years in the planning, programming and budgeting of the United Nations, Member States recognize the need to further enhance the design of programme objectives in the context of the medium-term plan and in the programme budget as a key element of results-based budgeting (see General Assembly resolution 55/231 of 23 December 2000).

16. It is obvious that, in order to give Member States a possibility to monitor progress and evaluate results, it will be necessary to arrive at an accurate description of the state of affairs at the beginning of the programming cycle and a clear and realistic indication of achievable results at its end.

17. The Joint Inspection Unit will, on the basis of selected economic and social programmes of the United Nations, examine whether such expectations can be met in view of the very different nature of the various programmes and make specific recommendations accordingly.

H. Follow-up on the implementation of the recommendations contained in reports of the Joint Inspection Unit on United Nations system support for science and technology in Africa (JIU/REP/94/1) and in Asia and the Pacific (JIU/REP/95/7)

18. The Unit decided to include this subject in its work programme for 2001 pursuant to article 12 of its statute which states the following:

> "Executive heads of organizations shall ensure that recommendations of the Unit approved by their respective competent organs are implemented as expeditiously as possible. Such implementation may be subject to

verification by the competent organs of the organizations, which may also request the Unit to issue follow-up reports. The Unit may also prepare such reports on its own initiative."

19. The proposed report is being prepared on the initiative of the Joint Inspection Unit as part of its new follow-up system, which has been endorsed by the General Assembly. This follow-up system seeks to track and report on actions taken on the Unit's recommendations by the competent legislative organs and the secretariats of the participating organizations.

20. In line with the foregoing, the follow-up report on the subject of science and technology will assess the degree to which the organizations have so far implemented the recommendations contained in the Unit's two reports under review following a time lapse of just over five years since the reports were issued in the mid-1990s. The process of verifying implementation will also take into account major developments within the United Nations system in the field of science and technology which are relevant to the recommendations of the two reports in question.

I. Involvement of civil society organizations in technical cooperation projects with selected entities of the United Nations system

21. Increased economic cooperation on an international scale has facilitated the participation of different actors in the common effort towards development. Among them, civil society has been called upon to play an important role, as recognized, inter alia, in the Millennium Declaration call "to give greater opportunities to the private sector, non-governmental organizations and civil society ... to contribute to the realization of the Organization's goals and programmes". Along the same lines, the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform" (A/51/950, para. 60) stated that the Secretary-General was "making arrangements for all United Nations entities to be open to and work closely with civil society organizations ... and to facilitate increased consultation and cooperation between the United Nations and such organizations."

22. Against this background, the Joint Inspection Unit has accepted a suggestion by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization to review the involvement of civil society in its cooperation with the United Nations system. It is worth recalling that the Unit has already issued reports on the involvement of both non-governmental organizations (JIU/REP/93/1 and JIU/REP/96/4) and the private sector (JIU/REP/99/6).

23. By assessing experiences and best practices in a selected number of specialized agencies, programmes and funds of the United Nations, the present report aims: to draw a profile of civil society as a partner of the United Nations system; to identify areas of technical cooperation activities in which it is already engaged and explore the potentiality of that engagement; to review existing guidelines of selected United Nations system organizations to ascertain the extent to which they reach out to civil society as partners and to explore the possibility of harmonizing them; and to examine the compliance of civil society organizations with the requirements of accountability and principles of the United Nations.

J. Evaluation of the optical disk system in the United Nations

24. The Joint Inspection Unit has been at the source of the establishment of the optical disk system, through its reports JIU/REP/86/9 entitled "Problems of storage and its costs in organizations of the United Nations system" (see A/41/806) and JIU/REP/89/11 entitled "From the optical disk pilot project at UNOG to an optical disk system for the United Nations" (see A/44/684). The two main purposes of the optical disk system were to establish electronic storage of United Nations documents and the capacity for their simultaneous retrieval in all official languages. In its resolution 44/201 B of 21 December 1989, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to implement the optical disk system project, which became fully operational in 1993.

25. In the report JIU/REP/89/11 mentioned above, the Inspectors also recommended that "the legislative bodies of the United Nations system [might] wish to consider installing optical disk systems of their own, using the results of the United Nations Office at Geneva pilot project, and ensuring the most cost-effective and compatible configuration". In the report on implementation of the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/52/206), the Secretary-General suggested that, "instead of establishing their own

individual systems, the agencies could consider utilizing an upgraded common United Nations system-wide ODS located in New York and Geneva as the present system is."

26. The optical disk system has been implemented only at the United Nations, where a tremendous increase in the number of users and in the volume of data stored has severely strained a system based on a technology almost 10 years old. A re-engineered optical disk system is expected to replace the current system by June 2001. It would thus be timely for the Joint Inspection Unit to evaluate the implementation of the optical disk system and its future, in the light of the Secretary-General's vision of an "electronic United Nations", and taking into account the need for an improved United Nations system-wide access to documents in a more user-friendly manner.

K. Use of management information systems: lessons learned from the experience of organizations in the United Nations system

27. Owing to rapid developments of information and communication technologies, organization-wide management information systems have become an indispensable tool for strategic and results-based management of financial, human and information resources. Currently, many United Nations system organizations are developing and implementing management information systems through trial and error. There is a generally accepted understanding that design and implementation of useful and cost-efficient management information systems are not easy tasks, which requires effective system-wide cooperation. In addition, implementation of management information systems is usually costly. It is therefore important to facilitate inter-agency cooperation for effective, efficient and economically viable development of management information systems. The concern to address such a system-wide cross-cutting management issue has also been expressed recently at the regular session of the Administrative Committee on Coordination held in October 2000 (see ACC/2000/20, para. 35).

28. In the proposed report, the Inspectors will provide a comparative analysis of major management information systems in United Nations system organizations, and will draw lessons from their practice and experience. The report will focus on those key management issues relating to management information systems, such as costs, financing and functionality and the supporting organizational structure, as well as implications for internal operating processes.

L. Peace operations: review of the Field Service category of personnel

29. The Field Service category of personnel was developed in the 1950s and was specifically designed for peacekeeping operations. However, changes that have occurred in the nature of peacekeeping operations during the five decades since the inception of the Field Service category have not been matched by corresponding changes in its composition and functions. Therefore, a review by the Joint Inspection Unit of this category of personnel is believed to be timely, as stated in the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/55/305-S/2000/809) and related reports of the Secretary-General (in particular A/55/502). By examining the objectives, staffing and functioning of the Field Service, the study will focus, among other things, on: (a) a review of the rules, regulations and procedures governing the recruitment and management of Field Service personnel; (b) an analysis of the current staffing of the Field Service and the profile of current incumbents of its posts and (c) an analysis of the current needs of peace operations for a core of administrative and technical civilian personnel.

M. Technical cooperation projects and their end-beneficiaries: selected case studies

30. Technical cooperation projects have been, through the years, an important and concrete manifestation of the support that organizations of the United Nations system provide for developing countries to build and enhance their national and regional capacities for development. However, the need to ensure that the potential of successful technical cooperation projects is fully explored to the benefit of the end-beneficiaries should be a constant objective for the United Nations system.

31. Originally proposed by the International Atomic Energy Agency, the objective of the report is to identify problems and opportunities for the United Nations system, as well as possible ways for stronger collaboration among United Nations organizations with the aim of maximizing the benefits for the end-beneficiaries.

32. The report will focus on a few projects, as case studies, executed by United Nations organizations in the area of water resources with special emphasis on the participation and involvement of the targeted communities as end-beneficiaries of the selected projects.

III. Preliminary listing of potential reports for 2002 and beyond

33. The following are indications of subjects that the Inspectors have identified for potential reports to be prepared during the course of 2002 and beyond. The list is tentative and does not necessarily imply that the Joint Inspection Unit is committed to taking up these subjects:

(a) Review of the financial situation in the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East;

(b) Review of management and administration in the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations;

(c) Evaluation of international drug control activities in the United Nations system;

(d) Comparative study of standards of accommodation, travel time and rest stopovers with a view to harmonizing policies throughout the United Nations system;

(e) Study in selected countries of the state of implementation of the strategy for providing primary education for all by 2015;

(f) Review of the structure of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations;

(g) Practice of donors attaching conditions to special-purpose contributions;

(h) Planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation in the United Nations system: learning from best practices;

(i) The impact of zero-nominal-growth budgets on the programmes of the specialized agencies of the United Nations;

(j) Comprehensive review of a specific peace operation.

IV. Notes

34. According to article 11, paragraph 5 of its statute, the Joint Inspection Unit produces notes submitted to the executive heads for use by them as they may decide. In this regard, the Unit plans to issue the following notes:

(a) Handling of Joint Inspection Unit reports by the United Nations Population Fund (2001);

(b) Handling of Joint Inspection Unit reports by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2002).